ecojudaism
OUR FAITH IN THE PLANET

This resource has been generously shared by:

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EcoJudaism and its constituent Synagogue members have no responsibility for advising on these matters, the notes are made available purely as an information resource and that Synagogue members should take professional advice.

This resource is being used to support the following Audit questions:

Section 3, Lifestyle Q: 5 – *Our synagogue encourages members to plant at home, in allotments and where possible in communal gardens and grow some of their own food*

Section 4, Land Q: 1 – *The land/premises at our synagogue includes areas set aside for growing fruits and vegetables and encouraging native wildlife and plants (e.g. indoor plants, vertical garden, grass-cutting schedules, bird boxes, bird feeders etc.)*

Section 4, Land Q: 2 – *Our synagogue's members engage in wildlife friendly gardening and horticulture on its grounds*

What can you grow in outside areas of the Synagogue to encourage native wildlife?

We have learnt over lockdown how important outdoor spaces are for our health and many have discovered gardening. Gardening can also be about conserving wildlife and sustainability, hopefully, reversing the decline in our native plants, insects as well as small mammals (ie hedgehogs). Our gardens and pots on patios and balconies etc provide a vital source of nectar and pollen and wildlife gardening creates a balanced ecology that adds interest and helps with general pest and disease maintenance.

Without pollinators in our gardens gathering nectar, we would not be able to grow fruit and vegetables and that will lead to a food shortage not only for amateurs but a professional growers.

Pollen and nectar gathered by adult bees provide their and their larvae's total diet. It is also the major part of the diet for various flies, midges, beetles, wasps, thrips, bugs, butterflies and moths. These in turn are the diet of predatory insects who visit flowers specially to feed. All of these insects pick up pollen on their bodies and transfer it flowers of the same plant bringing about pollination.

First make a decision what sort of garden do you want – I give 3 examples below.

A wildlife garden does not need to look messy – it is all to do with the choice of plants. It should include some natives but non-natives are also beloved of insects too – Buddlja. However, the planting does need to be diverse and cover different seasons. All include nectar-rich flowers for insects in search of pollen and nectar and will have simple flower structures, colour (or lines) and scent. You will need to avoid multi-layered or double flowers as these are often sterile. Look out for the RHS Perfect for Pollinators logo.

The garden should also include berry producing shrubs and trees to provide food and habitats for birds or habitats for small mammals. If you can create a pond for fish, frogs, turtles, toads and other wetland creatures, surround it with bulrushes, Saggitaria (arrowhead) and Irises, and add Water Lilies. This will attract wetland wildlife, such as the beautiful dragonfly that has aquatic larva. If you can't then a large plant saucer full of water, or a small enclosed water feature can still help. Also try to make an area for small mammals. Remember insect homes, bird boxes and feeders.

Types of planting are:

1. Meadow planting: If you have a large lawn leave a small section uncut or just turn your lawn to meadow – cutting once or twice a year. Long grass provides an excellent habitat for grasshoppers, beetles and insects and is an important food source for caterpillars and butterflies. To add colour sow meadow flowers, such as cowslip and oxe-eye daisies which provide plenty of pollen and nectar for a diversity of insects. Mixing grasses, native and non-native perennials and biennials will prolong the season of nectar and interest. Remember though if using native wildflowers – DO NOT improve the soil. You can buy ready blended seed mixes, which can be colour, height or impact based

2. Woodland area/edge planting, if you garden is near a wooded area you could visually extend in to it. Vertical supports of trees can be used to grow climbing roses or clematis. If you have room make a log pile as a wildlife habitat. This can look very structured if you wish. It could be white themed. Many white-flowering plants, such as hawthorn, viburnum and crab apples are followed by berries which provide food for birds and other animals. Other important plants for this type of planting include, yew, beech, holly, ivy and bluebells
3. Structured planting – For the best effect, plant your flower borders choosing a range of plants that flower at different times throughout the year ensuring a continuous supply of nectar. Plant in groups of the colour and scent, this makes it easier for insects to detect. Do not over-dead head, allow perennial seed heads to develop these provide both winter interest and food for birds and other animals. Astrantias, eryngiums, echinacea, asters, achilleas and chrysanthemums attract bees, hoverflies and butterflies. Mulch with bark or use ground cover plants that spread – majoram or sedums – which provide insect and mouse corridors. If you grow vegetables and fruit, please don't spray during the day and avoid chemicals try weak soapy water and mulching with olive wood.

   Use vertical spaces whether oblelisks or trellis for climbers such as honeysuckle. Use a patterned mixed species hedge or a single-species such as holly, yew, cotoneaster to provide berries and refuge for wildlife. Back to ground level in paving cracks introduce low growing plants such as sedums, dianthus or thymes. Lastly remember, you need a compost heap and a shed for the sherry, tool sharpener and storage.